1: Herskovits, Melville J. Life in a Haitian Village. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937.

Pp. xvi, 369, xix (pp. i-xix of index repaginated by HRAF as pp. 351-369); 12 plates (24 photographs).

Yale: Haiti Cxf sm67 937. DLC: F1926.H47. DLC card no.: 37-4442.

[The author describes the culture and society of a particular Haitian district with respect to the cultural and social conditions of Haiti in general and to their historical development. In this he concentrates upon religion, while social and economic conditions are treated in a rather generalized way. The interconnection between religion, society, and economy is not given sufficient consideration. The author draws the conclusion that the African heritage is of great importance for religion (Voodoo), art (music, dance), and certain social institutions (extended family, pronounced respect for elders, polygyny). The book contains a useful review of Haitian history.

Footnotes, appearing mostly as bibliographical citations in the text, will be found at the end of this source, category 116, pp. 327-338.]

Field date: 1934
Analyst: Sigrid Khera

Evaluation: Ethnologist-4, 5
Processed in 1967

2: Courlander, Harold. The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960.

Pp. xvi, 371; 48 plates; 2 text figures; appendices; notes; glossary; bibliography and discography; index.

Yale Nkg65 H12 960C. DLC: GR121. H3C65 1960. DLC card no.: 60-8760.

Only introductory material and pp. 1-202, 314-371 have been processed for the Haiti File.

[After an account of Haitian history the author brings a detailed description of Haitian religion and folklore, pointing out elements which he considers to have originated in a particular African region. Social organization and economy are discussed in a generalized way.]

Field date: 1937-1955
Analyst: Sigrid Khera

Evaluation: Folklorist-5
Processed in 1967

3: Leyburn, James G. The Haitian People. With a new introduction by Sidney W. Mintz. Yale Caribbean Series, No. 9. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

Pp. xlviii; 342; 1 map.

Yale: Geography Library, F1921 L49 1966. DLC: F1921 .L8 1966. DLC card no.: 66-9411.

[Although written in 1941, this volume, by an American sociologist, still remains the definitive general introduction to a description of Haitian national culture and society through its analysis of those institutional and historical forces determining the nature of the growth and development of Haitian social, political, and economic organization. The method of presentation is a macroscopic rather than microscopic one: instead of analyzing the processes and internal dynamics operating within any one subculture, sector, strata, social class, or geographical area, Leyburn considers the historical forces that underly all the national institutions. The economic, social, political, and cultural structures of society become the critical mutually-determining variables for each other. For example, the author considers cogently and lucidly some of the following: the relation of the military organization to government administration, effects of commerce and national productivity on political stability, the relations of the Catholic Church to the Vodoun Cult, the effects of the class system on marriage-family-kinship patterning, the social origins of revolutions, the economic basis in the rise of dictatorship and autocracy, the legal origins of constitution formation, the effects of race relations on the class structure and national identity, and the economics of changes in land tenure and plantation organization.

3: Leyburn, James G.

The discussion of these institutional interrelations is put into an historical context ranging from the period immediately prior to Independence in 1804 to the aftermath of the American military occupation of Haiti in the 1930's. The anthropologist, however, will find missing any thorough interpretation of rural peasant society or community organization. The author's major theoretical assumption is that Haitian society is sharply split into two castes -- the rural agrarian yeomanry or peasantry (95 o/o of the population) and the urban aristocratic elite, the latter dominating the political apparatus and national institutions. Leyburn feels that the history of institutional changes can most explicitly be seen using a class or caste theoretical framework. With a class system having sharp distinctions in occupation, education, level of income, source of income, language, religion, social values, and attitudes, he argues that Haiti was never able to overcome class separateness or exclusiveness to integrate its society into a viable democratic-capitalistic system with a potential for stable economic and political growth or development. And, as Mintz points out, the elite still extorts taxes from the peasantry without using these revenues to transform the rural economy or to create institutions for rural political participation and representation. (Only the military has consistently been outside the traditional political framework; this fact may have been responsible for the frequency and violence of the nineteenth century revolutions where

3: Leyburn, James G.

the military establishment was able to mobilize both the upper and lower classes to consolidate its forces for seizing control of the state.) The main conclusions from his evaluation of Haitian political and economic history are: Haiti has been expanding statically; the urban elite were accumulating wealth and concentrating power to reinforce their privileges and prerogatives without investing substantially in agricultural or industrial capital enterprises or in spreading parliamentary government to the local levels. If the elite were strengthening the aristocratic establishment at the expense of social innovations, rural over-population, declining agricultural productivity, and traditional peasant resistance to change were further compounding the situation of peasant stagnation, poverty, and powerlessness. Leyburn sees these following characteristics of Haitian government as possible consequences. Upholding of the rigid caste ideology and structure: autocratic or despotic presidential administrations, weak cabinets and legislatures' defects in the voting and electoral system, subordination of the judiciary to the presidency, extreme militarism, government graft and corruption, and the separation of the masses from the government. If Haiti could not maintain throughout its history an open, competitive political system with separation of powers and independent controls over the government bureaucracy, this may have been due also, Leyburn argues, to various national economic liabilities which were reinforcing the totalitarian patterns. Leyburn lists some of these: exclusion of foreign

S: Leyburn, James G.

investment and capital, overmilitirization draining the resources, low agricultural outputs despite the destruction of the system of large feudal-like estates and the forced labor 'peonage' system; inefficient marketing and commerce methods restrictive tariff policies, currency inflation, dependency on a single exportable crop despite irregularities in foreign commodity markets, elite apathy with regard to internal economic growth, and economic indebtedness and defaulting on foreign loans leading to bankruptcy. Whether caste divisiveness and class exploitation is the major factor responsible for modern Haitian political and economic dilemmas is open to question. Mintz suggests, in the introduction to the text, that the extreme differentials in wealth and power within Haitian society (as visible notably in the increasing amount of authority and resources devolving upon the elite, and in the decreasing levels of agricultural production and economic instability in the rural peasant areas) may be explainable by sets of factors other than the desire to maintain class boundary lines. In fact, Mintz suggests that class lines may not be so sharply drawn as Leyburn claims, and that both social mobility and a potentially active rural and urban middle class may be found. Although the major stress of the author's comments are on political and economic history within the context of an emergent caste structure, valuable material is also found on the following: peasant-elite forms of marriage, family, kinship, and social-sexual behavior; the nature of the territorial heirarchy; changes in land tenure and in the plantation system; rural peasant economies; the nature of Vodoun ideology and cult

3: Leyburn, James G.

ceremonials; and the effects of Catholicism in transforming the indigenous religious complex. Briefer comments are also made about the historical origins of the Creole language, demographic changes and urbanization, extent and spread of public education, and developments in public health and sanitation. To sum up, this book is a penetrating overview of Haitian culture, and should provide the necessary in-depth historical perspective and insight for appreciating more particularized and specialized studies of different aspects of Haitian society. As historical sociology, this book offers a broad contextual view of national institutions that can ideally interrelate other more narrow structural-functional analyses. The introduction by Mintz also includes discussion of changes in Haitian society that took place since the publication of this book. Both Mintz and Leyburn provide extensive annotated bibliographies on much of the social science literature on Haiti.]

Field date: no date
Analyst: Gilbert Winer

Evaluation: Sociologist-4,5
Processed in 1967-1968